

T H E

L O U N G E R.

[N^o LXII.]

Saturday, April 8. 1786.

*Absentem rusticus urbem
Tollis ad astra levis.*

HOR.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

S I R,

Mushroom Hall, 1st April 1786.

THE indulgence which you showed to my correspondence when in town, emboldens me to hope for the same favourable reception of my letters from the country. Here, Mr Lounger, I have much more time to write; but unfortunately I have much fewer subjects; and those too none of the most enlivening. I think there is a sort of fatality in it, that I am always in low spirits when I sit down to write to you. These constant easterly winds do affect one's nerves so!

I told you in my last, that my sister-in-law talked of going to London, and perhaps to the Continent; and how unwilling I should be to accompany her. She is actually gone some weeks ago, and I was not asked to be of the party; but she has taken her favourite Miss *Gusto*, because she can talk French a little more glibly, having been bred at a London boarding-school; though my French master says it is execrable *patois*, and won't be understood by people of fashion. Well! I don't desire to detract from any body; but some people are singular in their favourites. But it don't signify; we can be very happy at home, though it was a little cross to leave Edinburgh just when one had got into the humour of it; and when one began to know people a little, and people began to know one, which takes some time, you know, Mr Lounger, especially with people who are not quite so forward as some people, who are greater favourites with some people than other people are.

You must know that our society in Edinburgh had latterly become much more agreeable to me, from our intimacy with Mrs *Rattle*, who came lately from *Spa*, where she had gone for the recovery of her health, being vastly subject to low spirits whenever she remains long in this climate. Mrs *Rattle* was pleased to take very particular notice of me, being delighted, she said, with a certain *naïveté*, of which I was possessed; though Mrs *Mushroom*, who was jealous of her attention to me, said it was only because I was the best *hearer* of her acquaintance. Be that as it may, she was always remarkably civil and obliging to me; declared she looked on me as her particular *protégé*; and that, except one or two gentlemen with whom she had been acquainted abroad, I was the only person to whom she gave the constant *entrée* to her *boudoir*. I was invited to most of her parties, which made the town appear quite a different

thing to me from what it did when I wrote to you last. Unfortunately these pleasant days did not last long; my dear Mrs Rattle was suddenly taken ill soon after her husband's arrival in Edinburgh, (for he did not come till some time after her), and was obliged to leave town without being able to see even me. My brother and Mrs Mushroom, as I mentioned before, have set off for London with Miss Gusto; and so, Mr Lounger, I am come back to the country again.

I had but a very disagreeable journey of it, though my maid, (who was my sister-in-law's till she got a gentlewoman of Miss Gusto's recommending), and a very good sort of young man, to whom my brother has promised a church on an estate he has bought lately, took all possible care of me by the way. But the roads were miserably bad, and the post-chaises terribly jolting and uneasy. Though we talk so much of improvements, there must certainly be a great change to the worse in that article; for I remember travelling part of that road once before, along with my mother, in the diligence, which we found a very comfortable, easy sort of machine; and the roads were then remarkably smooth, and well made. Nor is the accommodation at the inns less fallen off from what it was at that time.

The weather has been dreadful since my arrival; and I have been perfectly starved with cold ever since I reach'd my father's; yet they tell me it was still colder some weeks before; though I am sure it was not so with us in town. Except one night at the play, when it was a very thin house, most of the fashionable company having gone to the *Dancing-Dogs*, and one other time, when I waited a great while in the lobby of the Assembly-room for my sister and another Lady, who had dined at Mrs *Midnight's*, I don't recollect having felt it disagreeably cold all the time I was in Edinburgh. On that last occasion I caught a little cold, which, however, has been infinitely worse since I removed to the country; though they say change of air is good for a cough, I have found mine much more troublesome here than in Edinburgh. Indeed one cannot stir out of doors without wetting one's feet; and I was t'other day over the shoes in dirt going to see my brother's Temple of Venus, which one of his improving advisers, Dr —, planned for him last autumn. Yet the Doctor was at no small pains making a walk to it, which consumed, as he told us, Lord knows how many waggon-loads of gravel; but unfortunately one of the *twists* led into a bog; for it is so artfully twisted, that I have heard the Doctor say, the Temple, which is scarce 200 yards from the house as the crow flies, is a good half mile off by the *serpentine*. I am sure I thought it far enough, when they would needs have me go and visit it. Besides, one meets cattle in this field, and dogs in that; and they are certainly grown much worse natured since I left the country.

I am glad, however, to take a long walk, though it should be somewhat dirty and disagreeable, to pass off a while of the morning (afternoon they call it here) from one to three, as well as to get a little wearied, that I may be able to sleep when we go to bed by eleven. My cough plagues me so all the night long, and then I hear some of the out-o'-door servants getting up when I have scarce slept a wink. It was but this very morning they broke off one of

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the charmingest dreams!—I thought I was at the Masquerade, (what a cross thing it was, Mr Lounger, to give up the Masquerade!) and there was my sister-in-law, and Captain *Coupee*, and Miss *Gusto*, and Lady *Rumpus*, and Mrs *Rattle*, and goodness knows how many fine people besides; and a Highlander in his plaid and philabeg followed me up and down, and I was told it was a Duke in disguise; and methought I was just standing up to dance a *Strathspey* with him,—when I was waked by one of our brutes in the stable-yard bawling out something about the first yoking with the brown mare.—I could have cried, Mr Lounger, when I thought that it was but a dream! and I had no body whom I could even tell it to here; for neither my mother nor sisters know any thing about a Masquerade, and they never saw Captain *Coupee*, nor Miss *Gusto*, nor Lady *Rumpus*, nor Mrs *Rattle*.

The *Homespuns*, indeed, are very good girls, and they come over to me as often as their father will let them; and we have long conversations about Edinburgh, and what I saw and heard there; and they are so charmed with what I tell them, and so distracted to get thither! We sometimes sit up talking of it two or three hours after all the rest of the family are quiet. My sister-in-law, to say truth, has not been unmindful of us since she has been gone, but has sent us down, among other things, a parcel of new books and Magazines, which I now and then read to the *Homespuns* at those fittings-up of ours. I dare not lend them a reading of any, since their father took it into his head to burn one for having a new *tête à tête* in it.

To be sure Mr *Homespun* is a very odd sort of a man, and if it were not for Mrs *Homespun* there would be no bearing of him; he is always railing at fine gentlemen, and fine ladies, and new fashions—he is certainly ten times more rude and disagreeable than he was before I went to town. And he says, that since I came, I have infected his daughters with ridiculous small waists, and large heads; and yet their mother and they all agree how much better they look since I brought them their new stays and heads. The first day they walked over here to welcome me home, they looked so red and so blowzy, I thought I never saw two such frights in my life; I could hardly believe they were the same girls I had left but four months before; and they were both astonished at my improvement in so short a time, only the eldest thought, as she has confessed to me since, that my complexion was somewhat of the palest. Now, to tell you a secret, Mr Lounger, I can mend that when I chuse, though I never ventured to try but once, for diversion's sake, that I rubbed a very very little out of Mrs *Rattle*'s French box on my cheeks, and every body observed how handsome I looked that day, and what a sparkle my eyes had; but I did not let any body know how they came by it.

Indeed if there is any sin in't, I am sure it is not worth the while here, for there is no body to see one needs care how one looks for. I used to be joked about our neighbour young *Broadcast*, who is reckoned one of the best matches in our neighbourhood, and my Father brought him to see me the very day after my arrival. But he is grown so fat and so coarse since I left this, and talks and laughs so loud, and speaks of nothing but the value of land, and the laying out of farms! I received him very coldly, and he has not come back

back since : For my own part, I don't care if he should never come back.

There is, however, some pleasure in dressing one's self, to have the amusement of making the people stare and wonder as they do. It is very diverting to me to hear the observations of some of the good Ladies, our neighbours, when I put on some of my town-things, on purpose to provoke them. La ! what a head !—Good gracious ! what a neck !—and mercy upon us ! what a bunch behind !—Sunday last, being the first opportunity for my appearing in public, I resolved to make a figure ; and so I went to church with my head as well curled as my maid and I could make it, my newest fashioned hat, and a round hoop Mrs Mushroom had just sent me from London. Would you think it, Mr Lounger, I had like to have been mobb'd in the coming out ? and the people followed the carriage till it came to the church-way ford in our way home.

But this will only do now and then ; and, on the whole, I find my time hang very heavy on my hands ; though I try all I can to coax away a great part of the day too. As I am a person of some consequence since my late journey to town, they indulge *me* a good deal in the disposal of my time, even though it sometimes runs a little cross to the regularity of theirs ; only my father growls now and then ; but we don't mind that much. I seldom rise till near eleven, and generally breakfast in bed. I read the newspapers my brother sends down, all except the politics. I stroll out, as I told you before, between one and three ; then, if I dress, or perhaps alter the fit of my cap, or change my feathers before the glass, I am seldom ready till long past dinner-time ; they put it back an hour ever since my brother came first home. In the evening I play the new minuets, teach my sisters cards, or we guess the riddles in the *Lady's Magazine* ; and I think of the *Promenade in Prince's Street*, and of *Dunn's rooms*, and of being in Edinburgh next winter if I can.

I am told there is to be a ball in our county-town, when the Judges come this way on their circuit, in about a fortnight hence, which the *Homespuns* talk of with great glee. And they tell me there is a set of players who are to perform there at that time, and the *German Tumbler* with his bear and dogs. But, for my part, I have very little inclination to go. After seeing *La-mash*, and *Wilson*, and *Kipling*, not to mention *Woods* and *Mrs Crawford*.—But above all, to think of the *German Tumbler* after *Richer* and *Dubois* ; and his dogs forsooth, after the dear little dogs at the *Black Bull*!—Oh ! Mr Lounger, as *Macbeth* says,

What a falling off is there !

It will be really compassionate in you to give us a paper now and then about what is going on in town. And do, Mr Lounger, let there be plenty of characters in it. I have told the *Homespuns*, the owners of all the characters in your paper from the very beginning, without missing one. For, believe me, I am, dear Mr Lounger, whether in town or country, your constant reader and admirer,

MARJORY MUSHROOM.

E D I N B U R G H :

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